



Public Consultation on the MPA Advisory Group's Report entitled “Expanding Ireland’s Marine Protected Area Network”

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction

The survey below forms a vital part of the public consultation on the expert group report on marine protected areas (MPAs) published in January 2021 by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The report covers three main areas:

- **What** features of our marine environment should be protected
- **Why** they should be protected (including a socio-economic analysis of benefits/costs involved), and
- **How** they should be protected.

This open consultation aims to gather the views and perspectives of a wide range of people, in order to guide the Government in its work to extend Ireland’s network of MPAs. Please note that all survey responses and opinions you provide to this consultation matter to us. They will be recorded and, along with the expert group report, they will be taken into account as part of this process.

Guide to completing the survey

In this anonymous public survey, you’ll be asked a series of questions that have to do with conserving our living seas and oceans, including: how YOU think protected areas should be defined, what YOU think they should include, and what YOU think about some of the

recommendations or implementation guidelines that have been proposed.

- Most of the survey questions are framed in a way that provides easy-to-answer options. Open text boxes are provided in many cases, in order for you to type or write in your answer in more detail.
- All boxes that are pre-filled with **Green Text** contain material taken directly from the published MPA report. We ask you to first read this material carefully and then answer the related questions immediately under the pre-filled box.
- The survey form also provides space for you to send in further comments and to tell us how you'd like to be kept informed about future progress, if so.

In order to get the best value out of your survey answers, it's essential that you make reference wherever possible to the relevant Part/section or Recommendation number in the MPA report that you wish to comment on.

If you'd prefer, the online version of this survey form can be filled in, saved and returned to at a later stage to complete it. To submit the survey to the consultation process, press the **Submit** button at the end of the survey. If you're saving your draft response, an automatic link to your survey form will be provided.

Starting with you

* A. Please select your gender

Please select one

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

* B. Please select your age group (based on age at last birthday)

Please select one answer

- 12 or under
- 13 - 18
- 19 - 24
- 25 - 34

- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64
- 65 - 74
- 75 and over
- Prefer not to say

* C. Please select your sector or area of occupation

Please select one answer

- | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Agriculture & Forestry | <input type="radio"/> Education | <input type="radio"/> Industry | <input type="radio"/> Tourism & Travel |
| <input type="radio"/> Aquaculture | <input type="radio"/> Environment & Climate | <input type="radio"/> IT | <input type="radio"/> Transport |
| <input type="radio"/> Arts & Entertainment | <input type="radio"/> Finance & Insurance | <input type="radio"/> Public Sector | <input type="radio"/> Other (Please specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Business | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fisheries | <input type="radio"/> Retail | <input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say |
| <input type="radio"/> Construction | <input type="radio"/> Health | <input type="radio"/> Services | |
| <input type="radio"/> Crime & Justice | <input type="radio"/> Homemaker | <input type="radio"/> Student | |

D. If you are responding in a professional capacity, if possible please insert your organisation's name below:

Enter answer in the box

North Western Waters Advisory Council

* E. Please enter your country of residence in the box below; If **Ireland** please state the county

Enter answer in the box

Ireland (Dublin)

Your opinions on marine protected areas (MPAs)

In this section, we're interested in your views and perspectives on (A) what a "marine protected area" (MPA) should be or could be, and (B) what principles you think are important in the process for identifying, designating, implementing and managing MPAs in Ireland.

1. In your opinion, what would a **good and effective MPA** look like? (Please describe key characteristics or features of such a site, in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

A good and effective MPA should be evidence based with clearly defined conservation objectives and proportionate management measures. Prior to MPA designation and implementation, the methods for achieving these objectives should be defined and a solid baseline of scientific data should also be obtained for the species or habitats to be protected. Marine habitats to be protected can differ in sensitivity, resilience potential and ecological values and as such, applicable rules and measures should be adapted to these specificities. Consideration should also be given to the advisability of mobilizing other measures than MPAs to meet conservation objectives, since MPAs are not miracle tools and are not effective on certain degradation factors, such as pollution of terrestrial origin for example.

Impact assessments of fishing activities should be conducted prior to an MPA establishment in relation to the conservation objectives of each site. A nuanced gear-specific approach, possibly taking into account gears precise configurations (e.g. type of rigging, weight, etc.) should be permitted especially in relation to fisheries-related impacts on species and habitats of concern. Similarly, differing levels of MPAs should be considered (from non-extractive which will have a major impact on fisheries to specified gear only areas or where practices are adapted/modified) so that MPA benefits can accrue whilst minimizing the impacts on fishers. It is also fundamental to assess the impact of other human activities, including those located outside the MPA but which may alter the conservation status of the habitat / species considered, as well as to assess the responsibility for each activity in its state of conservation.

An effective MPA should also be based on close and timely stakeholder consultation, starting at as early stage as possible, in particular with the fishing and seafood industry, and also integrating foreign fishermen with bilateral interests in the area via the MS and through the fishing Advisory Councils. As fishers are likely to be greatly impacted by MPAs, careful consideration needs to be paid to ensure a balanced trade-off between socio-economic impacts on coastal communities reliant on commercial fishing and habitat protection. Any restrictions on activities within MPAs should be as equitably borne by all sectors as possible. A full economic and social impact assessment should be carried out prior to the MPA establishment. This should take into account the cumulative impacts (both positive and negative) of all MPAs in the region, as well as the direct and indirect effects of displacement of effort for the region, in particular the displacement of effort to areas currently not frequented by fishing vessels.

The number of MPAs designated should be carefully phased and take account of other issues (loss of quota, effort displacement) to minimize the cumulative impact of MPAs. Where possible, protection zones should be established on sites where there is no or limited fishing activity at present, thus avoiding displacement of fisheries and maximizing the chances of a good state of habitat conservation. MPA designation should take account of existing infrastructures (e.g. wind-farms, aggregate extraction sites), so that global loss of activity is minimised.

The organisational body should ensure timely, coherent, transparent communication, based on scientific evidence regarding any impacts of MPAs, to allow for discussions with the relevant stakeholders.

A good and effective MPA will have quantifiable monitoring points that demonstrate whether or not the conservation objectives are being met. They should be monitored and reviewed routinely to ensure they remain fit for purpose. This review should be conducted in a timely manner to allow for appropriate amendments. There needs to be a mechanism where MPAs can be revisited should a new fishery emerge e. g. the very profitable and low impact whelk fishery which has only been developed in relatively recent years and all MPAs should be monitored and investigated for the emergence of new, controlled, fisheries as the ecosystem improves within the MPA. The advantage of providing adaptive management is further justified by

the effects of climate change.

To conclude, adequate time, financial and human resources, as well as a sufficient control effort, are fundamental for a good and effective MPA management and enforcement.

If no answer, click below

No Answer

2. The MPA report describes a wide range of approaches to area-based conservation or protection of the environment and nature, for example. By drawing on global, regional and national experience and evidence, in its Conclusions and Recommendations section (section 3.6.1) the expert group provides a definition (below) of what an MPA could be:

A geographically defined area of marine character or influence which is protected through legal means for the purpose of conservation of specified species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated objectives over the long term.

Do you agree or disagree with the **proposed operational definition for MPAs** in Ireland that's given in the green text above?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

3. If you don't fully agree with this definition, what elements or features you would **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in it? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

We would rephrase the definition as follows:

"A geographically defined area of marine character or influence which is protected through legal means, based on scientific evidence, for the purpose of conservation of specified species, habitats or ecosystems and their associated ecosystem services and cultural values, and managed with the intention of achieving stated objectives over the long term whilst minimising socio-economic impacts."

If no answer, click below

No Answer

What should Ireland's MPA network include?

4. The expert group's report recommends the inclusion of existing legally-protected marine sites (for example, Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protected Areas for birds) as part of the future network of MPAs in Ireland.

Do you agree or disagree with this recommendation?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

5. If you don't fully agree with this recommendation, please tell us why? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No Answer

6. Part 1 of the MPA report considers why we should have more area-based protection of the marine environment in Ireland, and where there are important gaps or opportunities for improvement.

Based on the analysis and details presented in the report, are there any **Animal species** or **Plant species** or **Habitat types** that you think must be given greater or improved protection through the legal designation of new MPAs? If so, please specify those animal/plant species and/or habitat types in the box below.

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

Appropriately managed and enhanced Native oyster stocks provide both ecosystem services and are part of the cultural maritime DNA of coastal communities (“Restoration of Native Oysters in Ireland | Marine Institute EMFF 2014 - 2020”).

Areas with high abundance of *Zostera* spp. (sea-grass) support diverse fauna and flora and act as critical nurseries for fish and shellfish and should be considered within MPA designation (Unsworth et al., 2019).

Deep water habitats are also areas that could be afforded improved protection via MPAs. Deep sea habitats off the Irish coast are home to a variety of coral reef species and provide complex habitats that support a diverse assemblage of fish utilising the range of niches (Soffker et al., 2011).

If no answer, click below

No Answer

7. Are there any **Other** ecosystem, oceanographic, cultural or other natural processes or features that you think should be afforded legal protection as part of the MPA network? (Please specify any such processes or features in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

If no answer, click below

No Answer

8. As part of their consideration of various types of area-based protection in the sea and other approaches to conservation (see sections 1.1.6 and 1.1.7 of the MPA report) the authors describe an additional type of managed site that's not really designed with nature conservation in mind but that can still contribute to marine biodiversity and long-term area-based conservation.

Such sites may come under the broad category of **Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs)**; these could include protected historical wrecks, protected spawning/nursery grounds for commercial fish or managed renewable energy sites, for example.

Based on this information and further details presented in the report, do you agree or disagree with the inclusion of OECMs as a potential part of Ireland's MPA network?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

9. If you don't fully agree with the inclusion of OECMs in an expanded MPA network, please tell us why? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

OECMs can complement MPAs and contribute to ecologically representative and effectively managed MPAs systems integrated into broader governance systems such as marine spatial planning (Diz et al., 2018). OECMs allow for a variety of sustainable use sectors to contribute to meeting conservation targets through their own area-based management initiatives. This is a very valuable opportunity whose implementation should be kept as flexible as possible, depending on the area specificities. Creating networks of MPAs and OECMs can result in more effective conservation overall. Recognizing OECMs as part of the MPAs network also makes conservation a multi-sectoral effort and explicitly acknowledges the needs of people (e.g., food security, income generation, livelihoods, cultural values).

If no answer, click below

- No answer

10. In examining the basis and the process for expanding Ireland's network of MPAs, in section 3.6.3 of the report the expert group makes a series of 66 recommendations, broadly covering:

- Ecological considerations

- Societal considerations
- Stakeholder engagement
- Governance and management
- Legislation
- Other considerations.

These important findings and conclusions informed a set of 14 key principles (below) that are recommended by the group in order to chart a way forward that is rational, well informed, evidence-based and balanced.

Recommended key principles stated in the report of the MPA Advisory Group (Oct 2020):

1. MPAs should be designated and managed to form a network that is designed to be coherent, representative, connected and resilient and to meet Ireland's commitments under international instruments such as the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive, OSPAR Convention, UN CBD and Aichi Targets (particularly Target 11) and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (particularly Goal 14).

2. Objectives for MPAs and the MPA network in Ireland may focus on the protection and recovery of:

- Threatened or declining species or habitats
- Important or ecologically significant species or habitats
- Features representative of the range of features present in Irish waters
- Areas of high biodiversity, naturalness or sensitivity
- Areas contributing to maintenance of ecosystem functioning and ecosystem services including carbon sequestration
- Areas with significant biocultural diversity value

3. MPA site objectives may also focus on the prevention of impacts from specified pressures such as artificial light or noise or buffering against the effects of climate change.

4. Conservation is taken here to mean maintenance of or restoration to a state that is as close as possible to the expected structure and functioning of the ecosystem given the general physiography and location of the area or as compared to selected reference sites or states. In MPAs designated for biocultural diversity value, conservation of this value would be the primary objective.

5. Additional benefits of MPAs may include opportunities for research and environmental education and to create socio-economic added value, provided that these are not in conflict

with the MPA site objectives.

6. A Systematic Conservation Planning (SCP) approach should be followed for planning, implementation and management of the expanded network, with a provision also for proposal of individual site-based MPAs.

7. In designing the network, consideration should be given to interactions with networks designated by other States in the same marine regions.

8. Early and sustained stakeholder engagement should be integral to the selection and management processes for MPAs. Engagement should be inclusive and equitable and the process should be designed to ensure that it is transparent, meaningful and facilitating.

9. Management measures should be established as appropriate for each MPA to achieve its stated conservation objectives and taking account of socio-economic and cultural considerations.

10. Management measures should be established as part of the designation process.

11. Management of MPAs should be based on the best available evidence and on the precautionary principle.

12. Carefully designed monitoring should be used to assess efficacy of the network and inform periodic reviews and adaptations of designations and management measures.

13. It is recommended that a national coordinating body should be established with the authority to coordinate planning and implementation, to foster good governance and ensure close collaboration among relevant departments and agencies and synergy with related undertakings such as the National Marine Planning Framework.

14. New legislation is needed to establish the necessary framework for governance and management and appropriate resources and funding must be allocated to plan, implement, manage, monitor, and review the MPA network.

Do you agree or disagree with the recommended principles for the process of MPA network expansion that are given in the green text above?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
-

Disagree

Don't know

No answer

11. What would you **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in these recommendations to help guide possible future steps in this process? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

Recommendation 2 mentions “Areas of high biodiversity, naturalness..”. How naturalness measured? Areas of commercially high value should also be considered in this recommendation.

Recommendation 11 should state: Management measures should be established as part of the designation process. Management of MPAs should be based on the best available evidence and on the precautionary principle but need to be proportionate to conservation issues.

If no answer, click below

No answer

How should we expand our MPA network?

In this section, we’re interested in your views and perspectives on (A) potential implementation steps and priorities in the delivery of an expanded MPA network, and (B) the principles you think are important in the process of engagement with all stakeholders, including the general public.

12. Informed by the expert group report, what do you think are the most significant challenges to implementation of an expanded MPA network in Ireland? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

The implementation of an expanded MPA network in Ireland will present different sets of challenges.

First of all, the effective management of MPAs will require substantial investment in monitoring, research, and policing.

Secondly, it is very important that the MPAs network becomes more than just lines on the map. Lack of clear criteria, timely process and relevant evidence to support conservation objectives could lead to confusion and poor designation of MPAs.

At the same time, the implementation of the MPA network will require stakeholders engagement and participation at planning, designation, and management stages to ensure legitimacy and buy-in from coastal communities. The designation and management of MPAs require considered attention to existing commercial and recreational uses of Ireland's marine space and sensitivity to the values associated with both material and immaterial maritime cultural heritage. The attitudes of fishers towards MPAs have been demonstrated as a critical area for MPA management as fishers' behaviour can result in their success or lack thereof.

Finally, the net benefits from potential MPAs are likely to span a wide range, including negative returns. Careful work is required to consider the circumstances of each proposal, and the social, economic and environmental considerations prevailing there. Similarly, economic evaluations of MPA networks should be conducted at the network scale.

If no answer, click below

No answer

13. In Part 3 of the report it's recommended that a **Systematic Conservation Planning** approach be adopted for planning, implementation and management of the expanded network, with some scope also for individual site proposals. Key phases and steps in the proposed planning approach are described in section 3.3.4 (including Figure 3.2 & Figure 3.3) of the report.

Do you agree or disagree with the systematic, structured approach recommended by the expert group?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

14. If you don't fully agree with the structured planning approach recommended by the expert group, what elements or features would you **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in the proposed

method to guide the process of expanding Ireland's MPA network? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

In Step 2, there is no clear timeline to demonstrate that an appropriate amount of time will be given to the early-stage processes of communication and stakeholder buy-in. Also, there is no clear indication on the communication tools and methods that will be used to ensure that all stakeholders are included. How are the relevant stakeholders going to be defined or prioritised?

Steps 6a, 6b and 7 are all steps joint with stakeholders but the resources or capacity of stakeholders to engage actively and productively is not acknowledged. Apart from a reference to a national marine coordinating body there is no reference made to resourcing the work.

Potential imbalance in stakeholder engagement due to differences in time and digital resources is not addressed effectively. More detail on how potential imbalances will be addressed should be provided in the systematic plan.

If no answer, click below

No answer

15. When you consider a structured approach like this, are there any elements or steps that you think should be **prioritised** over others? If so, please specify those elements and/or steps in the box below.

Enter answer in the box or select no answer below

A communication plan ensuring that the relevant stakeholders are engaged equitably and with a coherent time plan from the outset will be necessary, so time constraints don't hamper any steps or decisions.

If no answer, click below

No answer

16. Regarding stakeholder involvement in the process, section 3.2 of the report describes the importance of recognising and understanding differences in personal or organisational interests, and in socio-economic, sectoral or cultural contexts, for example. It also examines how stakeholder and public participation in the MPA process can be fostered.

This work by the expert group, plus its engagement with a variety of representative organisations in Ireland (see Annex 1 of the report), informed the development of guidelines (below) for successful stakeholder participation in the MPA process.

General guidelines for successful MPA stakeholder participation processes stated in the report of the MPA Advisory Group (Oct 2020):

1. Identify and engage all relevant stakeholders early in the planning process.
2. Clearly define and communicate policy and scientific goals and objectives that are consistent with other legislative goals. This should also include clear communication both of what MPAs are and what they are not, generating a common understanding, as well as providing the political context.
3. Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the planning need to be clearly defined and communicated.
4. Ensure that all involved understand the aim of the stakeholder participation process and provide clear rules, including aims and objectives, constraints, and codes of conduct (and consequences of not complying)
5. Providing science guidelines to ensure access to the best readily available scientific information, local knowledge, and spatial data by stakeholders, scientists, and decision-makers should be treated as a joint fact-finding approach.
6. Conflict among interests of stakeholders should be anticipated and acknowledged and discussions facilitated without bias (e.g. by using trained third-party facilitators), using an

approach such as the Community Voice method.

7. Anticipate media attention and allocate media and communication to a dedicated spokesperson.

8. Accept that the process will take time and afford that time to the process. The process needs to engage appropriate groups early and ensure a just transition in the short and long term. Developing a model of community co-management has been proven effective to facilitate this, provided that it is properly resourced and appropriate responsibility and accountability for governance remains with the State.

9. Make use of the existing context in which an MPA is planned. This includes working with existing organised structures (e.g., CLAMS (see Box 9), Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum (RIFF), Irish Islands Marine Resources Organisation and use the National Marine Planning Framework and the mechanisms that it establishes.

10. Accept that the design of MPAs can change during the stakeholder process and keep in mind that the aim is to achieve policy goals and meet scientific and feasibility guidelines, while minimising potential socioeconomic impacts and find broad social support.

11. MPAs need to be carefully managed, monitored and evaluated. This involves detailed planning and financing.

12. Acknowledge that MPA development is not merely a “factual” process, but involves emotional, moral and value-based responses from all those involved.

13. Address potential power imbalances in the participatory process by facilitating an engagement/management model that acknowledges historical relationships and recognises inequities.

Do you agree or disagree with the general guidelines for successful stakeholder participation set out in the MPA report and provided in the green text above?

Please select one answer

- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Don't know
- No answer

17. When you consider the general guidelines for stakeholder participation (outlined in question 16), is there anything you would **Change** or **Add** or **Delete** in them to help guide possible future steps in the MPA process? (Please enter information in the box below)

Enter information in box

Since communication is essential, there is a need to ensure that meeting spaces, clear language and communication tools are suitably accessible for all users. It is important to identify which users need additional support for this to be equitable. Communication of tangible benefits of MPAs for users (e.g. fishers) and associated negative implications needs to be transparent. Stakeholders might lose faith in the MPA if transparency of due process and the realistic outcomes are not effectively communicated.

Language and terminology must be easily understandable by all stakeholders, especially foreign stakeholders.

Capacity of stakeholders to engage in terms of resources and or skills should be acknowledged.

If no answer, click below

No answer

Further comments

18. Do you have any further comments on the process of expanding Ireland's MPA network that you'd like to add, in order to inform this consultation? (Please enter information in the box below)

As mentioned under 'Guide to completing the survey', in order to get the best value out of your survey answers, it's essential that you make reference wherever possible to the relevant Part/section or Recommendation number in the MPA report that you wish to comment on.

Enter information in box

The North Western Waters Advisory Council (NWWAC) is a representative and legitimate EU fisheries stakeholder body which is legally recognised as an organisation pursuing an aim of general European interest. It is established in Ireland and produces regular advice on its own initiative or at the request of the European Commission and the concerned Member States on all relevant matters related to fisheries

management in the EC offshore waters within the EEZ of Ireland and France (ICES areas 6 and 7). The principal aim of the NWWAC is to bring together stakeholders from across its European member countries to advise the Commission on matters of fisheries management in respect of the North Western Waters.

We currently have members from five European Member States: Belgium, France, Ireland, Spain and The Netherlands.

You can find a list of all members for our current financial year on our website. Our member organisations are grouped into two colleges: industry (consisting of organisations representing or having direct or indirect economic interests in the sectors of commercial fishing, aquaculture, processing, marketing, distribution or retail of seafood), and Other Interest Groups (organisations that are independent from economic interests linked to the sectors of commercial fishing, aquaculture, processing, marketing, distribution or retail of seafood; i.e. environmental NGOs, recreational fishing organisations, animal welfare etc).

Our participation in this consultation represents the opinion of all of our member organisation, not solely our Irish members, as the AC provides consensus advice based on our members' contributions.

If no answer, click below

No answer

19. If you would like to be kept informed on progress with the expansion of Ireland's MPA network, please let us know how you would like to receive such information? (Please note: this question is for general and anonymous purposes only. You will not be put on any mailing /subscription list without your express consent)

Select as many as relevant

- Website
- Social media
- Public service media
- Electronic newsfeed
- Newsletter/Magazine
- Other (please specify in the box below)

Other

What we will do with your responses

Thank you for taking the time to consider and respond to this public consultation.

Please note that all survey responses and opinions you provide to this consultation matter to us. They will be recorded and, along with the expert group report, they will be taken into account as part of this process.

Contact

marine.env@housing.gov.ie